

# Green Lands Blue Waters and Prioritizing CLC in NRCS Programs

REGAIN Office Hours – April 14, 2021





# Green Lands Blue Waters

**17 years old**

**Systems-level positioning**

**Home base**

**Geographic focus**

**Network**

- Formed in 2004 by reps of land grant universities & ag/environmental organizations
- Increase broad support for perenniality in agriculture - ***Continuous Living Cover***
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus
- Upper Mississippi River Basin  
MN, WI, IA, IL, MO with partners in LA
- Many partners - universities, researchers, educators, producer associations, environmental groups, food/ag industry, small business, nonprofits, governmental agencies, policy makers & farmers





# Continuous Living Cover (CLC)

## *Roots in the Ground Year Round*

- Five signature CLC Production Strategies
  - Agroforestry
  - Perennial Forage
  - Perennial Grains
  - Perennial Biomass
  - Rotations - Cover crops, cash cover crops & winter annuals
- \* Integration across strategies in whole farm systems \*



# Network approach to landscape scale change

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Green Lands Blue Waters and partners are:

- conducting research – breeding, agronomy, env'l, socioeconomic
- developing new educational, outreach/engagement capacity
- shaping policy
- building profitable markets for new crops
- working in farm fields



*changing the narrative around  
what's possible through agriculture*



# GLBW Key Roles

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## Connector

Researchers ↔ Practitioners  
- Training - Policy - Markets -  
Practitioners ↔ Farmers

## Collaborator

Partners across region & across  
CLC strategies - like REGAIN!

## Convener

Conference, NRCS cohort,  
Midwest Perennial Forage WG

## Communicator

newsletter, social media,  
narrative/resource creation



# Why Prioritize CLC in NRCS programs?

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- CLC farming is a very efficient use NRCS programs to improve conservation outcomes
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) & Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are NRCS programs that focus on improvement of water quality, soil health & other agricultural/natural resource concerns
- CLC farming can significantly improve conditions for resources of concern to NRCS, GLBW partners, farmers & communities.



# GLBW CLC NRCS Cohort

- **By coordinating across state lines**, we can learn from each other, champion CLC-focused funding priorities & encourage cross-program & cross-state synergies
- Resources in the works:
  - State-by-state reports on staff perspectives of best opportunities for CLC integration
  - Two success profiles of producers implementing CLC with the help of NRCS programs
- Find more resources to help you make the case for NRCS support of CLC & regenerative agricultural practices at [greenlandsbluewaters.org/resources/papers-guides/#clc-nrcs-programs](https://greenlandsbluewaters.org/resources/papers-guides/#clc-nrcs-programs)



# A few examples by state



Credit: Elisabeth Spratt

- Illinois - EQIP funding & ranking pools for alley cropping, conservation crop rotation, contour buffer strips, cover crops, forage/biomass plantings, grassed waterways, riparian buffers, silvopasture & tree/shrub establishment
- Iowa – Since FY19, CSP Grassland Conservation Initiative rewards livestock producers for conserving eligible land through grassland conservation contracts, including grazing lands
- Missouri - Since FY17, Agroforestry Initiative EQIP sub-account funding pool & ranking points for alley cropping, silvopasture, windbreak/shelterbelt, riparian forest buffer, multi-story cropping





# A few examples by state



Credit: Katherine Frels

- Minnesota- 100% stands of Kernza® IWG allowed in contour buffer strips, filter strips & cross wind traps
  - Encourages other perennial plantings in buffers & filter strips, such as forages, bioenergy crops & agroforestry
  - Also, Kernza on the approved plant list has opened doors for source water protection projects; municipalities & counties planting Kernza in wellhead protection areas to reduce nitrate pollution
- Wisconsin - Participates in a number of national initiatives - Soil Health, Honey Bee Pollinator & Source Water Protection; practices include cover crops, forage plantings & biomass plantings



# Thank You

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